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13 March 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director
National Foreign Assessment Center

STAT FROM : [redacted]
NFAC Plans and Programs Staff

SUBJECT : Cable Dissemination System

1. I have talked with people from the Operations Center, ORD, Cable Secretariat, and ODP over the past few days about the feasibility of sorting and printing cables by branch in the Operations Center. All agree that it can be done, most probably at a low cost. There is a larger policy issue, however, that should be addressed before discussing various solutions to the problem. In 1972, then Executive-Director Colby made a recommendation, approved by DCI Helms, to consolidate the dissemination of cable traffic in the Office of Communications. The decision to consolidate this effort was prompted in part by a DDI proposal to further develop OCR's MAD System to handle State cables. This resulted in the DDI giving up 8 positions and dismantling OCR's highly successful Machine-Assisted Dissemination System (MAD).

2. From NFAC's point of view, the dissemination system has gotten worse, rather than better. The MAD System provided branch and sometimes individual dissemination on NSA and Agency SI traffic. It worked and it was relatively inexpensive, compared to the multimillion dollar Cable Dissemination System that replaced it. Today NFAC sorts by hand the cables it receives from the Cable Secretariat--a clear step backward.

That's me!

3. Given this background, and the reluctance of OC to do anything that would remedy the situation, it is recommended that you raise with the Agency's senior management the issue of whose responsibility it is to meet NFAC's cable dissemination requirements. What NFAC is asking for is a means to ensure timely delivery of electrically-disseminated message traffic for current intelligence analysts. It requires disseminating all cable traffic within two hours after it reaches the building, already sorted by branch, 24-hours-a-day. This would be an important step forward.

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4. If the problem is left to us to solve--we will need a short-term solution. Once SAFE is fully operational we can use it as our major dissemination system provided it is connected directly to the MAX switch. This would enable NFAC to avoid the CDS delays. Pre-SAFE conceptual options open to us are as follows:

(1) Request ODP to provide the batching and sorting of our traffic using their central facility and two high-speed printers located in the Operations Center. This would be a low-cost option if ODP agreed. NFAC would have to pay for the printers and possibly for some programming time. Cost: Approximately $75K.

(2) Use the ORD-provided minicomputers in the Operations Center to batch and sort the traffic. This could be an equally low cost option but would probably mean some disruption to ORD's crisis management project in the Operations Center. Cost: a range from $75-$400K.

(3) Reinstitute the old MAD System in OCR. This would be a high cost somewhat longer term option. It would require regaining the 8 positions, dedicating floor space that we do not have, and $200K for printers.

(4) Do nothing and continue to rely on the Operations Center disseminating one advance copy to the person with the greatest need. This is an acceptable option if NFAC is willing to continue to pay the additional cost in slower delivery times and overtime costs involved in manually sorting all of NFAC's cable traffic in the individual registries.

5. Only options 1 and 2 are truly viable at this time. Of these the first option would appear to be the most attractive but is by no means without potential problems. On the positive side option 1 is attractive because of cost. We would probably have to pay for only some high-speed printers. More importantly, we know that ODP can handle the volume of traffic whereas there is some question of whether the ORD minicomputers have the capacity to sort and still maintain their other functions. A need for more capacity would require buying another mini-computer at a cost of about $150K. Second, ODP has a requirement to be operational 24-hours-a-day and has the necessary maintenance people on hand. ORD does not. Third, NFAC could use the ODP network to move cable traffic to our remote locations, such as OGCR. Finally, this option could be implemented almost immediately. It would also permit ORD to stay on track with its present crisis management project.

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6. On the negative side option 1 anticipates improved reliability on the CDS/ODP interface. In the past this has given everyone grief, but we are encouraged by steady improvement in the reliability of this interface. Also option 1 assumes there will be a CDS improvement in service time by summer. On balance I believe that this solution is the best compromise at this time.

7. All of these options are intended to be patchwork solutions that could be easily dismantled once SAFE becomes operational. The inefficiencies of the CDS have larger implications for Project SAFE, however. STAT formally requested in October 1978 that the SAFE Project Manager look into this question. The Systems Analysis Staff in OCR is currently working on this problem and will take this up with you separately. The Systems Analysis Staff has confirmed that our recommendations for a "quick fix" are sound and that the existing MAD software could be used to help ODP in sorting traffic if necessary. In short, it is a relatively easy problem to solve from the technician's point of view. It is bureaucratic politics that stand in the way.

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